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(8) Yukio Takasu picked new ambassador to UN

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)

July 11, 2007

The government decided in a cabinet meeting yesterday to appoint Yukio Takasu, a minister at the Japanese Embassy in the United States, to be the new ambassador to the United Nations. It also appointed two ambassadors: Tatsumaro Terazawa, former director general of the National Tax Administration Agency, as ambassador to Colombia; and Hideto Mitamura, director general of the Research Office on Security at the House of Representatives, as ambassador to

Zambia. It formally announced their appointments yesterday.

Yukio Takasu, ambassador to the UN: Left the University of Tokyo in mid-course and joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in 1969; has served as a minister at the Japanese Embassy in the US since August 2006, after serving in such posts as director general of the now-defunct Multilateral Cooperation Department and ambassador to the International Organization in Vienna; age 60.

Tatsumaro Terazawa, ambassador to Colombia: Graduated from the University of Tokyo and joined the Finance Ministry in 1971; serving as acting board chairman at the Urban Renaissance Agency since July 2004, after serving in such posts as director general of the Finance Bureau and chief of the National Tax Administration Agency; age 60.

Hideto Mitamura, ambassador to Zambia: Graduated from Hitotsunbashi University and entered MOFA in 1971; has served as chief of the Research Office on Security at the Lower House since September 2005, after serving as a minister at the Japanese Embassy in the US, as well as director general of the International Affairs Department at the Lower House; age 58.

(9) Kisha no Me (Reporter's Eye) column: Difference of stances between former Defense Minister Kyuma and former Mayor of Nagasaki City Motoshima over the use of atomic bombs

MAINICHI (Page 6) (Abridged)
July 11, 2007

Nobuyuki Yokota

Fumio Kyuma (66), a member of House of Representatives elected from the atom-bombed city of Nagasaki, stated in a speech on June 30 that

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the use of atom bombs "couldn't be helped." Three days later he resigned from the post to take the responsibility for that controversial comment. I think it was only natural for Kyuma to resign from the post for his remark lacked any understanding of history.

Meanwhile, there is someone who likewise has stated for nearly 10 years that the dropping of atom bombs "couldn't be helped." That person is Hitoshi Motoshima (85), who served as mayor of Nagasaki City from 1979 through 1995. The expressions used by the two were the same, but their positions and why they use that particular expression differs. By making a comparison between the two, I am going to shed light on how Japan has been perfunctory to date in understanding history regarding the dropping of atomic bombs and assuming its war responsibility.

Motoshima started as a socialist politician belonging to the Japan Socialist Party but he later shifted to the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Having served as a prefectoral assembly member for five terms, he was then elected mayor. As a mayor, he stated in 1988 before a prefectoral assembly session: "The Emperor was responsible for the war." In 1990, he was shot by a senior rightist organization member only narrowly surviving.

Meanwhile, Kyuma, after working for the Agriculture Ministry and serving as a prefectoral assembly member, ran on the LDP ticket for a Lower House election and won the seat. Although Kyuma is dismissive about Japan possessing nuclear arms, his stock argument is that the best approach for Japan is to continue to depend on America's nuclear umbrella and to uphold the Japan-US Security Treaty.

As the reasons why the United States dropped atomic bombs on Japan, a variety of political and military reasons have been cited, such as: (1) the bombs were a diplomatic trump card to gain a military edge over the USSR; (2) they were a demonstration of the results of the Manhattan Project to the US Congress; and (3) they were used as an experiment on human bodies. That the use of atomic bombs quickened the end of the war and saved many lives is an argument backed by a certain number of people in the US to justify the drop of atomic bombs. However, most Americans disagree with Kyuma's view

that atomic bombs were dropped to prevent the USSR from participating in the war. The US dropped two types of atomic bombs -- uranium gun-type and plutonium implosion-type -- and the two types of bombs were reportedly used in line with the initial plan. Given all this, Kyuma, as a responsible officer for national defense in the Japanese government, which seeks nuclear nonproliferation under the three nonnuclear principles, was indeed out of line in terms of historical perceptions. Speaking of Kyuma's controversial comment, Motoshima disappointedly noted: "He is an expert on national defense policy, but he has lacked the understanding of the Pacific War, as well as of the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan."

Motoshima from the beginning was not of the opinion that the dropping of atomic bombs "could not be helped." In March 1995, Motoshima contended at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan: "The dropping of atomic bombs on Japan was as great a crime committed by human beings in the 20th century as the Holocaust involving the Jewish people." In reaction, reporters asked him whether (then) US President Truman, who gave orders for atomic bombs to be dropped, was the same as Hitler. Motoshima was stuck for an answer.

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Based on his experience like this that there is the gap in views of the use of atomic bombs between Japan and other countries, Motoshima has come to acutely realize that it is impossible for both sides to understand each other if they simply insist on the justice of their arguments and that they only criticize each other. Motoshima eventually arrived at the conclusion that the dropping of atomic bombs could not be helped. He came to the conclusion that although people in the bombed cities tend to emphasize the casualties and damage, what caused such an aftermath? Motoshima now says, "If Japan had not started the war with the US, no atomic bombs would have ever been dropped." He continues: "I searched for a meeting point with those who insist, 'Dropping atomic bombs was correct.' Atomic-bomb survivors might oppose my attitude, but I thought it would be meaningless if I was unable to persuade others even slightly." This attitude stems from his way as a Christian of pardoning others and his strong conviction that he wished to understand even the enemy. It was also affected by discrimination he suffered and his war experience as an Imperial Japanese Army soldier. All these led to his remark calling on the Emperor to take war responsibility, on which he staked his political life, and his questioning then of postwar Japan.

In contrast, Kyuma made an excuse for his "couldn't be helped" remark, noting, "'Couldn't be helped' easily pops out from my mouth," as if to say it was a slip of the tongue. He also cited the upcoming Upper House election as the reason for his resignation, giving the impression that he lacks the mentality to understand the pain and hardships the bombed cities have suffered. This is also true of senior ruling coalition members and cabinet members under the Abe administration.

Motoshima continues questioning Japan's war responsibility as an assailant and the contradiction between Japan's dependence on America's nuclear umbrella and Japan's anti-nuclear movement. He is accordingly exposed to criticism, for instance, for his "masochistic view of history and his "condoning the use of atomic bombs," from various quarters. Motoshima insists: "Are weapons that are not allowed to be used only nuclear weapons? We must definitely oppose war that will set the stage for every weapon to be used." Motoshima's argument is indeed worth considering.

Nuclear weapons are weapons of mass destruction that indiscriminately kill many civilians. I think the use of atomic bombs was a mistake, and that nuclear weapons must be scrapped. The same mistake must not be repeated. For that, victims and assailants must understand each other and sympathize with each other's circumstances.

Japan has failed to make efforts to build common perception of history with other countries and also failed to make clear historical views as to the dropping of atomic bombs and war responsibility. Unless Japan changes in this regard, a second Kyuma

would appear.

(10) Interim report issued by Pension Payment Records Verification Committee lacks substance: Details of 50 million premium payment record-keeping errors not included

SANKEI (Page 3) (Excerpts)
July 11, 2007

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Efforts to shed light on the cause of pension premium payment record-keeping errors and the locus of the responsibility have made progress with the compilation of an interim report by the Pension Premium Payment Record-Keeping Error Problem Verification Committee. However, the report simply enumerated problems that had already been pointed out, such as problems about the computer system and the Social Insurance Agency's (SIA) organizational corruption. It steered clear of explaining relations between those problems and the 50 million cases. There is no getting around the impression that the report lacks in-depth accounts, as a result of the panel attaching importance to addressing a strong request from the Kantei and the ruling camp to compile it before the Upper House election starts.

Regarding the pension premium payments record-keeping fiasco, a number of mismanagement cases, such as 50 million cases that have not yet been integrated into basic on-line pension numbers and 14.3 million cases recorded on microfilm but have yet to be integrated, have been discovered, but contributors concerning those figures have not yet been identified due in part to a complex record-keeping system. The interim report just sorted out the structure of a number of problems, by showing in charts the actual state of unidentified premium payments records.

The charts are exactly the same as those the SIA released at panel meetings and Diet deliberations. No detailed accounts regarding unidentified payment records, such as the ratio of those who are already dead among contributors to the 50 million payment cases, were given.

Regarding the cause and background of the problems, the report pointed out that the record-keeping system, administrative work and the distorted personnel system, such as the local administrator system, had problems. However, regarding relations between these problems and a massive number of missing records, the report gave no more than what has already been revealed. Details have yet to be clarified.

The report also put on hold the responsibility of successive welfare, and welfare and labor ministers, just noting that details would be unveiled in the process of getting to the bottom of what has actually happened, as an official of the administrative office of the panel put it.

Behind the release of such a half-baked interim report is strong pressure from the government and the ruling parties, which wanted to produce some results with the Upper House election just ahead.

Commenting on the release of the interim report right before the public announcement of the Upper House election, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki during a press briefing yesterday ruled

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out the possibility of pressure being applied to the panel. He noted, "We thought people expected us to release facts found out as of now as soon as possible." However, there is a strong impression that both the interim report and the basic guidelines for confirming payment records, unveiled yesterday, were released with the upcoming election in mind.

The next step is for three working groups including system experts and juridical experts to launch full-scale studies to ferret out the actual situation in the run-up for the compilation of a final report in the fall.

Local third party committees for confirming pension payment records to start receiving investigation requests

Internal Affairs and Communications (MIAC) Minister Yoshihide Suga during a press conference on the 10th announced that the ministry will launch third-party committees to confirm pension premium payment records, which are responsible for final examination of pension benefit payment records at 50 locations throughout the nation and start accepting requests for payment record examination through Social Insurance Agency offices.

MIAC will hold a national meeting of 50 local committee chairs. It plans to explain basic guidelines for identifying premium contributors compiled by the central panel on the 9th so that participants would familiarize themselves the guidelines.

Local panels will be set up at the Internal Affairs Ministry's administrative evaluation bureau's offices in 50 locations throughout the country. Their job is to examine payment records, based on the basic guidelines and standards set by the central panel and actual identification cases.

However, local panels will only deal with cases regarding which social insurance offices found errors when they checked payment records but judged that they would not make decisions because claimants did not have receipts for their premium payments.

(11) Editorial: Pension benefit guidelines must be applied impartially

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 5) (Full)
July 11, 2007

The Central Third-Party Committee to Check Pension Records, established by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, has come up with a set of guidelines, paving the way for those with no premium payment records to claim their benefits. We would like to see the government make every effort to, for instance, eliminate regional disparities in approving claims.

The guidelines are designed in principle to approve claims that are not "unreasonable and appear credible." The government is urged to deal with diversified claims flexibly.

We are concerned that decisions by 50 local committees in the nation on similar claims might vary.

As was explained by the panel's chair, Go Kajitani, decisions will be made based on the principle of free evaluation of evidence. In other words, local committees will make decisions based on the "degree of certainty" by comprehensively judging the contents of claims, data other than receipts, and accounts by persons concerned.

Not to allow regional disparities to arise, local committees are urged to seek the central committee's assistance in making difficult decisions and the central committee in turn should convey its results to all local committees as often as possible.

Although the central committee has already presented some approved cases, it must present additional approval/disapproval situations once full-fledged recognition work gets underway. The central

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committee should also make clear what kind of data or accounts made a difference.

The cooperation of claimants is essential in recognition work. The presentation of approved cases is likely to help claimants prepare necessary documents and thereby restoring their rights to receive benefits speedily.

We believe it is possible to make public the results of individual

cases while giving consideration to their privacy.

In some cases, Social Insurance Agency (SIA) records do not show employees' premiums withheld at source that should have been paid into the employees' pension program. As possible causes, the employers' failure to pay into the program and embezzlement by SIA workers are being mentioned. Under the existing law, such employees are not entitled to receive benefits, which is unreasonable.

The central committee is calling for legal steps to allow them to receive benefits, which is natural.

The government should respond to the call during the extraordinary Diet session scheduled to open in the fall, making a distinction with the question of the responsibility of the employers and others. The step will coincide with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's declaration that the government will pay benefits in full to those who dutifully paid their premiums.

The guidelines are intended to approve claims broadly based on the belief that human nature is fundamentally good. At the same time, the government must study measures against false claims.

SCHIEFFER